Fostering Intrapreneurship through the Implementation of Internal Corporate Accelerators

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***Abstract* — Today's markets are characterized by fast and radical changes, posing an essential challenge to established companies. Startups, yet, seem to be more capable in developing radical innovations to succeed in those volatile markets. Thus, established companies started to experiment with various approaches to implement startup-like structures in their organization. Internal corporate accelerators (ICAs) are a novel form of corporate venturing, aiming to foster bottom-up innovations through intrapreneurship. However, ICAs still lack empirical investigations. This work contributes to a deeper understanding of the interface between the ICA and the core organization and the respective support activities (resource access and support services) that create an innovation-supportive work environment for the intrapreneurial team. The results of this qualitative study, comprising 12 interviews with ICA teams out of two German high-tech companies, show that the resources provided by ICAs differ from the support activities of external accelerators. Further, the study shows that some resources show both supportive as well as obstructive potential for the intrapreneurial teams within the ICA.**

Keywords — Corporate Entrepreneurship; Organizational Ambidexterity; Corporate Venturing; Resource-based View; Internal Corporate Accelerators; Intrapreneurship

I. Introduction: Volatile Markets and the Role of Innovation in Times of Digitalization

The digitalization, sometimes also named the fourth industrial revolution [1], is seen as one key driver for fast and radical changes of today's market parameters [2]. These changes simultaneously occur on several dimensions, e.g. technology [3, 4], customer preferences [5], competitive situation [6] or business model [5] and lead to challenges for companies. Especially, established companies struggle with those fast and radical changes [7], while startups are described to be primarily benefiting from volatile market environments [8].

Some scholars argue that these advantages may be rooted in different organizational structures that come along with the increasing maturity of companies [9, 10]. Startups, also being described as "*a temporary organization designed to search for a repeatable and scalable business model*" [11, p. xvii] have a strong focus on product innovation [9]. Consequently, their structures are designed to support the creation of more radical innovations. Established companies on the other hand shift away from this initial focus on product innovation to a strong focus on process innovation [12]. This is mandatory to serve the needs of more mature markets, e.g. high-quality standards and low costs [13], which results in more rigid and strongly efficiency-oriented structures [14, 15].

These structures, which can be characterized e.g. by high level of standardization and bureaucracy [16, 17], risk-averse behavior [18] and slow decision-making processes [14, 17], are beneficial for implementing incremental innovation and process innovations [8, 10]. However, at the same time these structures seem to be obstructive regarding the implementation of more radical innovations [8]. This poses a challenge to established companies, since improving the existing business (incremental innovation) while simultaneously exploring new business opportunities (radical innovation), becomes imperative to stay successful in the long-term [19].

Consequently, established companies increasingly experiment on how to implement entrepreneurial behavior and startup-like structures within their organization to foster the rise of radical innovations [20, 21]. The creation of new businesses within established companies is discussed within the topic of corporate entrepreneurship, which has experienced strong attention in research and practice. Corporate entrepreneurship, and especially corporate venturing (CV), offers established companies strategic tools to increase their adaptability towards market changes and their product innovation capabilities [22].

One of the key elements in implementing such startup-like structures is the design of the interface between the CV-initiative and the core organization [23]. This is crucial since startup-like structures show negative externalities with the structures of the core organization [24]. Consequently, a structural separation is recommended to grant an adequate level of autonomy that is necessary for the development of radical innovation [25], while having subtle control to ensure strategic alignment with the core organization [23, 26].

To implement such startup-like structures and, thus, foster more radical innovations, various forms of CV initiatives have emerged [27]. Thereby, these CV forms follow both, internal and external approaches. Externally-oriented CV forms focus on using and internalizing external innovations, while internally-oriented CV forms foster the innovation potential within the company, often by enabling bottom-up innovation from their employees [28]. Therefore, companies recently started to experiment with new, internally-oriented CV forms that are similar to the more mature, externally-oriented forms.

One of these different internally-oriented manifestations of CV is the so-called internal corporate accelerator (ICA) [27]. This relatively new CV form has gained much attention as the

relevance of intrapreneurial employees (bottom-up driven innovation) gets recognized more and more [29]. ICAs are used as catalysts for this kind of innovative employees to foster bottom-up innovation and intrapreneurial behavior within established companies.

Both, internal and external corporate accelerators, provide services and resources to support radical innovation initiatives, either from internal intrapreneurial teams or external startups. ICAs further create an innovation-supportive work environment for the intrapreneurial teams. This is needed, since processes, working methods or structures within the core organization are rather obstructive for this kind of innovation initiative.

As ICAs are a relatively novel CV form, they still lack empirical investigations. This work targets a deeper understanding of the interface between the ICA and the core organization and the respective support activities (resource access and support services) that are provided for the intrapreneurial team, which are working within the ICA. Therefore, the following question shall be answered:

RQ: How do support activities of ICA look like and what is their effect on the work of the respective intrapreneurial teams?

II. Literature review

A. Corporate *Entrepreneurship* / Intrapreneurship

"*We believe that Corporate Entrepreneurship will become an increasingly important topic over the next decade, as competitive, technological, social and political change in the environment of U.S. firms continues to accelerate.*" [22, p. 13]. Corporate Entrepreneurship has been linked to firms' innovativeness, agility and high level of strategic responsiveness. In general, corporate entrepreneurship can be divided into the two subtopics strategic renewal and CV [22]. Strategic renewal focusses on the organizational transformation and rejuvenation of a company [30], while CV on the other hand focusses on the creation of dual structures to create radical innovations besides the core business [30, 31].

A related concept that is discussed in literature, is the concept of intrapreneurship [29, 32]. Intrapreneurship combines the terms intra-organizational and entrepreneurship and describes the entrepreneurial behavior of employees within established companies [33]. *"Intrapreneurship describes behaviors by which, without having been requested to do so, employees innovate and seek business opportunities to benefit the organization."* [29, p. 272]. Following this definition, intrapreneurship can be understood as bottom-up initiated innovation projects from employees that have no official work mandate [34]. Corporate entrepreneurship, on the other hand, involves top-down driven initiatives that are implemented to achieve a specific objective [28].

Besides some differences, intrapreneurship and corporate entrepreneurship have a common base when it comes to the effects they have on the core organization. Both concepts support the implementation of more radical innovation in established companies [33, 35]. Following this, they can be understood as managerial tools that support established companies to foster organizational ambidexterity [36]. Ambidexterity describes the organizational capability of improving the core business (exploitation) and simultaneously creating new businesses (exploration) [37, 38]. This capability has been proven to be essential for companies to stay successful in the long-term [19].

However, organizational ambidexterity comprises several challenges, stemming from the different underlying learning modes of exploitation and exploration [37, 39]. Exploitation, on one hand, is based on improving existing knowledge (incremental innovation), while exploration is based on the creation of new knowledge (radical innovation) [19]. Exploitation requires a high level of structures, bureaucracy, formalization and processes [40]. Exploration, on the other hand, works better in environments that are characterized by a low level of formalized structures and dynamic routines instead of rather static processes [23].

These incompatible requirements can lead to inherent tensions and conflicts [37]. To bypass them, management literature recommends the implementation of dual structures. A structural separation allows the co-existence of these incompatible environments within one organization [41]. CV offers a broad range of different organizational forms that support the structural separation of the exploitation-oriented core organization and exploration-oriented initiative [36]. Thereby, the range can vary from fully externally-oriented CV forms, e.g. spin-offs [42] or corporate venture capital [43], to fully internally-oriented CV forms, e.g. internal corporate ventures [35] or ICAs [44].

One main challenge for CV is the design of the interface to the core organization [45]. Management has to find an adequate trade-off between control (to ensure strategic alignment) and autonomy (to grant freedom for the development of radical ideas) [26, 45]. Furthermore, the level of integration is important since corporate startups can benefit from the access to resources and knowhow of the core organization and vice versa [46]. However, too much structural integration can impact the performance negatively, e.g. through processual guidelines from the core organization [26, 47].

Recently, especially internal CV forms, like the ICA have emerged in practice [27]. ICAs are implemented to foster intrapreneurial behavior by offering formalized programs for bottom-up innovation ideas from employees. Accordingly, they do not only support one specific idea, but rather innovative ideas in general, with the aim to enable the intrapreneurial potential [28] within an organization. Therefore, ICAs offer different support activities such as mentoring, coaching, office spaces with appropriate infrastructure, budget and the grant of a specific amount of time to work on the innovation project besides their daily business [27, 44].

Due to their novelty, ICAs still lack empirical research [27]. Especially, the design of the organizational interface between the ICA and the core organization, shows a high level of

ambiguity. It remains unclear how the ICA should design the work environment (resource access and support services) to support the intrapreneurial team in an optimal way. Thus, this paper aims at investigating the ICAs' work environment from a resource-based view perspective.

B. The Resource Based View in the Context of Established Companies

The resource-based view (RBV) is rooted in the in the strategic management research. The basic assumption behind RBV is that companies can be understood as unique bundles of resources (and capabilities) [48]. Differences in these resource bundles and differences in how these resources are combined, can lead to a sustainable competitive advantage of the respective companies [49]. To achieve this, the resources must be valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable and non-substitutable, which is also known as the VRIN criteria [50].

In the early days of the RBV theory, resources were divided into two categories: tangible and intangible resource. Tangible resources are visible/physical assets, such as buildings, machineries or financial assets [49]. Intangible resources on the other hand are e.g. trademarks, intellectual property, brand, reputation and knowhow [50, 51]. This initial bipolar view has been extended over the past decades [52, 53]. Table 1 summarizes a sample of further categories on RBV, which offer a more detailed perspective.

Table 1: Resource categorizations according to RBV literature

Literature	Resource categories
Brush, Greene, & Hart 2001 [53]	(1) social resources
	(2) human resources
	(3) physical resources
	(4) financial resources
	(5) technology resources
	(6) organizational resources
Greene, Brush & Brown 1997 [52]	(1) human resources
	(2) social resources
	(3) organizational resources
	(4) physical resources
	(5) financial resources

In the context of established companies, several of these resource categories have been linked to superior performance and sustainable competitive advantages. E.g. human resources[54] or reputation and employees' knowhow show strong impact on a company's business success [51].

C. *RBV in the Context of Entrepreneurship*

In the context of entrepreneurship, different research efforts were focusing on the relation between specific resource categories and the performance and/or success of startups. Amongst others, knowledge resources [53, 55], human resources [56], reputational resources [53] and financial resources have been linked to superior performance or success of startups [56].

Thereby, knowledge resources have been identified as the initial key resource that serves as a basis to acquire further relevant resources such as human resources or financial resources. This resources category encompasses different types of knowhow: e.g. technical knowhow, business knowhow or entrepreneurial knowhow [53].

Human resources, is a further category that is strongly related to knowledge resources (sometimes even used synonymously), since both are directly linked to the individual [53, 56]. The ability to access and maintain networks, the education of the entrepreneur as well as specific industry knowhow are part of human resources and have been linked to the performance of a startup [56].

Reputational resources, which are again related to the entrepreneurs themselves, consist of the ability to establish a business and have a direct and indirect effect on the acquisition of financial resources [57]. The reputation of an entrepreneur is enhanced by aspects from human resources such as education, networks and personal experiences [53].

Financial resources have been linked to a startups' growth [58], survival [56] and performance [59], since they are crucial when it comes to the development and especially commercialization of a product or service [60].

D. RBV in the Context of Incubators and Accelerators

Incubators offer various support activities and resources to support startups to overcome their liabilities of smallness and newness by providing them:

- access to physical resources (e.g. office spaces),
- access to financial resources (e.g. venture capital),
- access to networks & partners (e.g. companies) and
- business & office support (e.g. admin. services).

These support services and resources [61, 62] have a positive impact on the development and growth of startups [61, 63].

The provision of physical resources (e.g. office spaces), shared resources (e.g. reception or meeting rooms) [63, 64] and sometimes even access to laboratories and research equipment [65], are lowering the overhead costs of startups. Access to this kind of infrastructure further supports startups in focusing on their core activities [63] like R&D or marketing.

The access to the incubators' network reduces startups' costs that arise during the search for various kinds of partners [63]. These partners comprise e.g. financial investors (business angels, venture capitalists) but also other players like potential customers of strategic partners, which are a basis for subsequent growth [63].

Business support through mentors and coaches accelerates the

learning curve of a startup by leveraging past experiences as well as existing knowledge and facilitates the creation of new tactical knowledge. This dynamic way to create, develop and re-configurate resources has a positive effect on the startup performance [62, 63].

E. RBV in the Context of Corporate Incubators and Accelerators

A specialized form of incubators are so-called corporate incubators, which support startups by providing them with physical, intangible and knowledge resources [66]. Startups especially benefit from the access to corporate resources [66], such as high level human capital or highly specialized technical knowhow [67], but also from the companies' experience to scale businesses. Furthermore, the company behind the incubator can serve as a first strategic partner, customer or investor, which can further ease and accelerate the development of the startup [68].

Corporate accelerators, which are sometimes described as a 'novel version' of corporate incubation programs [66, 69], offer similar support activities than incubators [68]. However, they show differences when it comes to their objectives and organizational design (e.g. shorter time frame, less investment) [70]. This leads to the assumption that the 'optimal' support (provided services and access to resources), which startups experience in corporate accelerators differs from the support they get from corporate incubators.

When it comes to the novel CV form of ICAs, the design of the interface and the support activities becomes even more ambiguous. This may be rooted in the fact that the employees, which experience a temporary exemption from their daily business, are still part of the core organization and, thus, must follow the existing processes and rules. Consequently, ICAs on one hand provide the intrapreneurial teams with access to resources, but, on the other hand, also with autonomy from the core organization. This is different to the tasks of externally-oriented corporate accelerators, leading to the following proposition:

P1: ICA differ regarding their support activities (offered resources and support services) from external oriented corporate accelerators or incubators.

Startups participating in external corporate accelerators experience access to the resources of the respective company, which help them to accelerate their existing business. Intrapreneurial teams already profit from the company's resources, as they are part of the organization. However, the fact that the team members are still employees of the core organization means that they experience limitations regarding their 'freedom to operate', even within the ICA. This leads to the following proposition:

P2: In difference to external corporate accelerators, support activities of ICA can be both supportive and obstructive for the work of intrapreneurial teams.

Those propositions provide the basis to answer this paper's general research question. At the same time, they demonstrate that the novel CV form of the ICA still lacks research of design of the interface and the respective support activities, consisting of resources and services. Thus, this study tries to increase the understanding in this field, taking a RBV perspective.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Data sample and collection (semi-structured interviews)

This study compares ICA programs of two German high-tech companies. The two programs where accompanied by the researchers for at least one and a half years.

Different actors from the two ICA programs where interviewed to reduce the interview bias (social desirability). Therefore, team leaders, team members, the manager of the ICAs (corporate business angel [71]) and a coach were interviewed. The interviews that took place between June 2015 and March 2018, were recorded and transcribed. The twelve interviews, with an average length of approx. one hour, add up to a total number of 735 recorded minutes and 295 pages.

Besides the different interviewee perspectives, additional data sources like press releases and social media activities were collected and analyzed to meet the criterion of data triangulation, which is recommended to strengthen the credibility of the results.

The interviews were guided semi-structured with open-ended questions that allowed the interviewer to discover and follow-up on new insights that came up in the interview.

The semi-structured interviews consist of questions about:

- strategic targets of the core organization,
- goal setting for the embedded entrepreneurial team,
- team creation process and leadership behavior,
- tasks, actions, behavior and required skills,
- interface and interaction with the core organization (autonomy, shared services, resource allocation, ...).

B. Data analysis

Qualitative research is recommended, when there is little known about the research field. This is the case when it comes to CV in general, and especially for the relatively new CV form of the ICA.

The transcribed interviews were coded by minimum one of the authors following grounded theory principles to uncover key themes and patterns, which are linked to the available resources and their effects on the work of the intrapreneurial teams.

The codebook was defined by combining the codes from the open and axial coding process [72] and matched with support activities from earlier research in the related field of business incubators [73]. This research has classified support activities of business incubators into the five overall categories:

- *knowledge development* (e.g. business advice through coaching to overcome knowledge gaps),
- *resource mobilization* (e.g. access to resources such as infrastructure or shared administrative services),
- *monitoring* (e.g. evaluation of tenants' performance to deliver services adapted to their specific needs),
- *creation of exposure* (e.g. utilizing incubators' channels to attract attention of potential clients and partners),
- *networking* (e.g. to networks to crucial partnerships, enhance knowledge and exchange experience with peers).

Based on the coding process, 75 initial codes were investigated that can be composed into 13 general support activities [73]. The identified support activities belong to the five major resource categories of organizational resources (OR), human resources (HR), relational resources (RR), financial resources (FR) and physical resources (PR). The final coding phase (selective coding) was used to analyze the support activities and the resource configuration of ICAs' work environment.

IV. Results

The results show that the different resources provided by ICAs create an innovation-supportive work environment for the intrapreneurial teams and the respective innovation projects.

The intrapreneurial teams that participated in the two examined accelerators in average consists of 2.6 members. Within the initial teams, three dominant roles could be identified: *team leader*, *marketer* and *technical expert*. In some cases, one person combined several roles or roles were taken by several individuals. Each team had at least one mentor from the core organization and access to a (startup) coach or other experts.

The examined ICAs offered office spaces and shared infrastructure, e.g. meeting rooms or reception, which, however, were not mandatory to use. Furthermore, employees participating in an accelerator program received an exemption from their daily business. This exemption varied from one to two days up to five days a week. Both ICA programs presented an overall duration of three months. Additionally, a small budget was available for the teams that could be used to buy materials or employ service providers.

The ICAs further offer access to a broad network across the company and in one case even into the local startup scene. Physical and virtual platforms, such as events like demo days, meetups or online platforms, also connect the entrepreneurial community within a company. Two intrapreneurial teams from the sample even found their team members through such platforms.

Some of the resources that are provided were mentioned in the interviews to be especially supportive for the teams' performance. Table 3 consists of 13 resource types and is summarizing the supportive resources of the ICA and their positive effects on the intrapreneurial team:

Table 2: Supportive resource types within the internal corporate accelerator

Resource category	Support activities	Positive effect
OR	*Exemption from daily business*	Full time exemption from daily business was mentioned as helpful to focus during the relatively short program duration
OR	*Power Promoter*	Formalized access to power promoters through mentorship, pitch boards, etc. offer short-cuts to the decider in the company
OR	*Processual short cuts*	Bypassing slow and static processes from core organization (shared services) by offering alternative paths through ICAs
HR	*Access to shared services*	Provides additional capacity (specific expertise for non-core activities) and increases the focus of the team
HR	*Mentoring and coaching*	External coaches (startup methods) and internal mentors (company and domain expertise) provide expertise for the team
HR	*Full time exemption*	Full time exemption from daily business enables the teams to fully concentrate on the validation during the ICA program
RR	*Contact platform*	Virtual or physical platforms ease the search for team members and supporters across the whole company
RR	*Access to stakeholder*	Intrapreneurial projects have good access to deciders and stakeholder, e.g. through mentorship and pitching events
RR	*Intrapreneur evangelists*	ICAs provide access to a strong supporter community that of alumni, patrons, etc. who enable intrapreneurial projects
RR	*Reputation corporate brand*	Credibility and safety towards external partners/suppliers and potential customers since they are backed by a mature company
RR	*Internal reputation*	Innovation ideas experience in the internal communication more credibility (and also support) when backed through ICA
PR	*Separated office spaces*	Spatial separation creates innovation-friendly environment and reduces distractions for the intrapreneurial teams
PR	*Shared infrastructure*	Increases focus on core activities of developing a MVP and driving markets test/analysis and reduces overhead costs

Some support activities, on the other hand, were mentioned to be obstructive since they influenced the work of the respective teams in a rather negative way by limiting their 'freedom' to operate. The following Table 4 consists of six resource types identified to be obstructive.

Table 3: Obstructive resource types within the internal corporate accelerator

Resource category	Support Activities	Negative effect
OR	*General processual restrictions*	Existing processes are usually mandatory but too slow and static, delaying project progress
OR	*Purchasing regulations*	Framework contract or purchasing guidelines hinder the flexibility for non-core business projects
OR	*Budget retrieval*	Even though budget was "theoretically" available, it was difficult to use, which led to delays in the progress of the idea

OR	*Part-time exemption*	Daily business has highest priority leading to less time for the intrapreneurial project than agreed
OR	*Follow-up structures*	Inadequate follow-up structures result in too early transfer into core organization structures and sometimes the idea dies
OR	*Team members acquisition*	Conflicts of objectives, e.g. capacity bottlenecks, lead to challenges regarding the exemption for team members

A. Testing the propositions

Proposition 1: ICAs have a dual role that differs from the work of external corporate accelerators. This dual role consists of two tasks: (1) granting access to resources of the core organization and (2) providing a work environment that offers a specific level of freedom from the core organizations' governance. Both, internally- and externally-oriented corporate accelerators grant access to the company's resources. However, providing freedom to operate seems to be only relevant for ICAs. The relevance of the second task is underlined by the fact that the main part of support activities identified in this work belong to the resource category OR. Consequently, proposition 1 is confirmed.

Proposition 2: The biggest challenge for the intrapreneurial teams, which are working within the ICA program, are limiting factors regarding their actual way of working. These limitations typically are rooted in the processes and rules of the core organization. Even though the ICA offers a more innovation-supportive work environment than the core organization, some support activities are still perceived to be obstructive for the intrapreneurial teams. The results of this work highlight that support activities that were mentioned to be obstructive are all part of OR, such as mandatory processes or too static structures, confirming proposition 2.

V. DISCUSSION

One major challenge for established companies is to re-invent their innovation processes to become more entrepreneurial and more agile. In today's volatile market environments this is an imperative to stay successful in the long-term. One way to achieve this is to foster the bottom-up entrepreneurial potential within the company, also known as intrapreneurship [28, 33].

Recently novel CV forms emerged in practice, inspired by similar initiatives from the entrepreneurship area. ICAs are one of these new CV forms, which still lacks empirical investigation. Therefore, this work targets to contribute to a deeper understanding of the interface between the ICA and the core organization and the respective support activities (resource access and support services) that are provided for the intrapreneurial team, following a RBV perspective.

This research highlights the difference between internally- and externally-oriented corporate accelerators. External corporate accelerators typically support startups with an existing product or service, to accelerate the startups' growth. ICAs, on the other hand, aim at the fast validation of very early stage ideas, which is typically less capital intensive than later stage activities, e.g. when it comes to commercialization. This seems to be the reason why FR were not considered to be a relevant supportive factor to intrapreneurial teams in the context of ICAs.

What further differentiates internally- and externally-oriented corporate accelerators is the motivation of the respective teams to participate in an accelerator program. Startups have strong interest to access the organizations' resources or aim at a strategic partnership with the company behind the accelerator. Intrapreneurial teams, on the other hand, rather profit from the 'freedom' that is needed to work on radically innovative ideas within an established company. The results of this work are underpinning this, since all support activities that were mentioned as obstructive belong to the OR category.

This work highlights that the identified support activities belonging to the resource category OR show a high conflict potential. Intrapreneurial teams that participate in ICA programs must validate their innovation idea within a very short period of time. Delays that typically occur when teams must use the standard processes of the core organizations, are rather obstructive for the performance and, thus, critical for the overall success of the teams. This issue often emerges when the core organization's processes do not match with the requirements of the teams. e.g. when the intrapreneurial teams wants to use software that is not verified by the IT or wants to work with suppliers which are not listed yet.

Access to infrastructure, such as office spaces or meeting rooms, and access to shared services like the legal-, accounting- or purchasing department, support the intrapreneurial teams to focus on their core activity, which is the validation of their idea. However, this only applies if the discrepancy in speed and the rather static processes do not impact the work of the teams too much. Since ICAs are implemented to support rather radical innovation projects, shared services do not completely match the needs of intrapreneurial teams, which has a high potential for tensions and negative influence on the performance of the teams.

In this regard, the credibility and reputation of the ICA can serve as an intermediary and supporter for the intrapreneurial teams while interacting with the core organization. The ICAs in both cases had support from the top management, which further strengthens this effect. The leader of the ICA, also known as corporate business angel [71], allocates resources and, thus, creates innovation-friendly processes and structures within the core organization that serves as a basis for fostering the intrapreneurial potential.

Another observation of this work is that most of the intrapreneurial projects were digital innovation projects. Those face the challenge that they mostly do not fit into existing silo-structures of a company, which typically causes conflicts of competences. Under the 'umbrella' of the ICA, intrapreneurial teams experience a certain level of protection against companies' politics and potential conflicts or tensions that typically influence the progress of the ideas negatively.

However, missing formalized follow-up structures after the

acceleration program can pose serious challenges for the intrapreneurial teams when they have to 'survive' without the protecting umbrella of the ICA. Especially ideas that do not pursue short-term targets of the core organization and that may have disruptive potential for the current business are most likely to be eliminated.

Generally, internal CV offers several options to tackle the challenges arising with radical changes, caused by trends like the digitalization and globalization. ICAs, as a relatively new CV form are a tool for the fast validation of bottom-up innovation ideas that primarily do not fit the current core business. Thus, ICA foster the intrapreneurial potential within a company by offering a formalized path for intrapreneurial individuals and their ideas.

A. Managerial Implications

One main challenge in setting up an ICA seems to be the creation of a work environment that provides freedom from the processes and rules of the core organization, while simultaneously granting access to required resources. Therefore, changes in the structures of the core organization are needed, which seem to require top management support.

Intrapreneurial projects participating in ICAs often do not fit into the core organization due to various reasons: e.g. different customer group, different way of working, different business model or even conflicting targets. To avoid conflicts and to offer the ideas optimal support, different formalized follow-up structures are required. Re-transferring the idea back to the core organization may be appropriate for some ideas, while some others require further freedom to operate, which can be offered in corporate incubators or innovation hubs. Sometimes ideas show a high potential but a low relevance, often leading to a spin-off. To optimize the benefit from all ideas, formalized follow-up structures, seem to be highly relevant.

B. *Future Research*

Future research may address, how the identified support activities influence the performance of the intrapreneurial teams and which of them are critical for the success of the projects. A further interesting aspect for future research could be the link between the specific characteristics of an idea (radical, cannibalizing, level of uncertainty) and the 'optimal' work environment.

Another topic that may be addressed by future researchers is the formalization of follow-up structures for intrapreneurial projects and the interplay with other CV forms. It seems reasonable that the integration of ICAs into an ecosystem of different CV forms can be beneficial, e.g. due to the potential synergy effects among them.

C. Limitations of the study

Although this research has highlighted promising insights on the organizational design of the interface between ICAs and the core organizations, there are limitations regarding the derived implications. In the nature of qualitative research, it is not avoidable to find interpretations made by the researchers. Furthermore, a social desirability bias is likely since the data collection with semi-structured interviews is based on direct interactions between the interviewer and the interviewee. And lastly, the study is based on cases from two German high-tech companies, which is limiting the generalization of the results and, thus, leads to the need for further research that confirm or falsify the current findings.

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